

Takako Saito

Resonances of DiStances Vol. 4

Takako Saito is an artist of many talents. Born into a wealthy family in Sabae, a city located in Fukui Prefecture, in 1929, she left home at an early age to live a life beyond the tightly defined boundaries of Japanese society. Her longing for freedom from convention took her to different countries like England, Italy, and the US, where she earned a living as a teacher, construction worker, cook, babysitter, and saleswoman, among other things. In 1979, she ended her nomadic lifestyle and settled down in Düsseldorf, where she lives and works until today. Her studio-residence in the city outskirts is a Gesamtkunstwerk that encapsulates her diverse life experiences and the tremendous creative power she continues to pour into her works.

As a young school teacher, Takako Saito wanted to make a difference in Japanese society. In the 1950s, she joined the art education movement „Sozo Biiku Undou“, which was founded by the art critic and collector Sadajiro Kubo. The goal of this educational reform movement was to infuse post-war Japan with a playful subtext and to give rise to new ideas, values, and trends by engaging people in a creative dialogue. It was in this progressive context that Saito met the avant-garde movements of the time. She moved to New York in 1963 and shared an apartment with the artist Ay-O (Takao Iijima), who introduced her to George Maciunas and the Fluxus movement. Over the following years, Saito became heavily involved with Fluxus and met pioneering artists like John Cage and Shigeo Kubota.

Play, chance, and viewer participation are principles of Sozo Biiku Undou and Fluxus, albeit in different ways. Uniquely situated at the intersection of these art movements, Takako Saito has developed a distinct artistic language that sets her apart from contemporaries. She cleverly extracts the central ideas and core methods of participatory art, applying them to both her interactive performances and intricately handcrafted objects made from wood, paper, and other materials. The do-it-yourself principle permeates many of her works, including the "You and Me Shop", which invites viewers to discover and unfold their creative potential. Saito breaks down traditional boundaries between different genres and thereby cultivates an experimental spirit that promotes democratic co-creation among audiences.



Basedonart is proud to present Takako Saito's „You and Me Shop,“ a compilation of artists' books and a selection of never-before-seen works from the 1950s and 1960s. The latter originated mainly in Japan, belonging to a large body of abstract paintings, watercolors, collages, and etchings that showcase the artist's delicate handwriting. Moreover, they reflect the influence of artists like Ei-Q (Hideo Sugita) and highlight Saito's largely unnoticed, yet significant contribution to painterly trends in post-war Japan.

Text Merit Zimmermann

30.10.– 31.12.2021 | Wed - Fri 2 - 6 pm | Sat 12 - 4 pm and by appointment
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